

Connecticut Youth Suicide Prevention Initiative (CYSPI) Meeting Minutes

May 15, 2007
United Way
Wethersfield, CT
8:30 AM – 10:30 AM

In Attendance: Allison Case, DMHAS; Andrea Duarte, DMHAS; Amy James, UCHC; Sue Moores, United Way; Judy Stonger, CT Clearinghouse; Carey Thompson, CT Dept of Public Safety

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Youth Input

Carey Thompson asked if the sub-committee had a mechanism for youth input and has a peer advocate in mind who is entering high school in the Fall with an interest in counseling and is willing to attend meetings if appropriate. Andrea will speak to Deanna about. The Youth Suicide Advisory Board is working to identify a representative group of youth to inform efforts, including the CYSPI, in the future.

Hartford Pilot

Andrea reported that clinicians have been hired at Quirk Middle School (Freddie Valentin) and Saint Francis (Jennifer Paul). They are anxious to begin pilot implementation. Freddie is also interested in expanding student programming and support around depression awareness and suicide prevention. Andrea informed Freddie of mini-grants in fall and the SMH's SOS Middle School curriculum as an option. Andrea also expects he will be in touch with the Clearinghouse for additional information and materials. Both Andrea and Amy have reviewed the SOS Middle School curriculum and feel it is very well put together in comparison to the evidence-based HS version. In fact, Amy, as one of the SOS evaluators, believes the Middle School curriculum is at least as good if not better than the High School curriculum.

Amy also reported on the development and discussion with Saint Francis professionals around a computer-based data entry system that combines nearly all local and cross-site data collection needs. In addition, the system includes information on gender identification, sexuality, gambling, gang related activity and legal issues that the Saint Francis team was interested in. A paper version of the draft system was available for sub-committee member review. The Saint Francis team is meeting on May 17 to discuss final revisions to the system. Their goal is to follow students for 24 months.

Amy summarized the two primary research hypotheses of this component of the project, (1) youth seen at the school-based health center will be more likely to follow-up with referrals and receive appropriate care/counseling; and (2) determining whether the school or hospital based health center is more successful in getting youth to engage in appropriate community-based care (i.e. which is better at getting community referrals to "stick").

Andrea described the remaining issues with this component of the project, (1) within Quirk, what should be done with students who “age out” of the program and move on to high school; (2) whether the initial plan to target seventh graders is feasible when physicals are required at sixth and eighth graders; and (3) who within the school system should be identified on the consent form as the appropriate, participant protection contact for questions related to the project.

High School Component

Andrea reported that DMHAS’s contract with Trumbull High School is awaiting signature there. Trumbull High School is large (over 2,000 students) and demographically dissimilar to the Connecticut Technical High School System (CTHSS), therefore, their data will be analyzed separately and will be compared against its-self. Amy discussed use of a missing data algorithm to do this.

Andrea stated that Rob Aseltine decided to incentivize the return of consent forms and modified the participant recruitment/evaluation model. Previously Amy was attending New Student Orientations at technical high schools to present information on the project to parents and answer related questions. Another alternative previously considered was inclusion of consent forms with materials mailed to parents with forms and information required for school enrollment over the summer. Andrea and Rob have now determined that the evaluation will be rolled out in 2 cohorts of CTHSS.

Cohort 1 will be evaluated in 2007-2008 and cohort 2 will be evaluated in 2008-2009. Cohorts will be further delineated by semester; cohort 1A will be evaluated in Fall 2007, cohort 1B in Spring 2008, 2A in Fall 2008 and 2B in Spring 2008. Students will be encouraged to return parent consent forms via a drawing for a \$50 gift certificate to a clothing store such as Abercrombie and Fitch or the Gap. All students returning a completed form at each school, whether or not their parents consent to their participation in the evaluation or not, will be entered into the drawing. A larger drawing for each cohort for a “big-ticket” item like a portable DVD player will also be offered for completion of the evaluation. Incentives are being considered because the technical high schools are relatively small and the project will need very high participation rates to hit target numbers.

Amy also discussed that she, Andrea and Rob have discussed a change in pre- and post-testing methods. Previously, an assembly hall administration model had been discussed. For management and measurement reasons, the plan is now to break students out into classroom-size groups in a one-day administration.

Amy clarified that all schools may implement the SOS program this coming academic year but the evaluation will occur over two years. Allison and Judy asked if repeated implementation would impact evaluation (treatment effect) and whether there would be differences in schools evaluated after the first delivery of the curriculum versus after the fourth delivery per say. Amy explained that based on UConn’s analysis of over 4,000 students and given that the program is “so basic and out of the box” the Evaluation Team does not feel this issue is cause for concern.

SOS Training for the Connecticut Technical High School System (CTHSS) counselors is scheduled for Tuesday, August 28. At this point, it is undetermined whether the entire system will be trained or if the school professionals will be trained over two years (by cohort). Andrea, the Evaluation Team (Amy & Rob) and Bill Turek from SDE have a meeting later this month (29th, 30th or 31st) to work out these and other implementation details.

Andrea explained that CTHSS counselors will also be offered Assessing and Managing Suicide Risk (AMSR): Core Competencies Training provided by Wheeler Clinic and may be prioritized to receive this training based on cohort and/or sub-cohort. The first Core Competencies training is scheduled for October 9. Enrollment in these training sessions will be limited to 50 participants each.

College Component

Andrea reported that she and Amy met with Connecticut State University (CSU) college counseling center directors/designees on April 24. Overall attendees were very supportive and asked realistic questions. Some concern was raised about the impact such programming might have on demand for counseling services and the Universities' capacities to meet the possible increased need.

The project will support Southern and Western's use of SOS this Fall (2007). Central and Eastern will implement SOS next Fall (2008) and have an additional year to plan.

Andrea also explained that she needed to contact the Vice President of Student Affairs at Western to firm up the school's commitment to implementation of the project following this meeting and was successful in doing so.

Andrea met with Lauren Siembab, Director of DMHAS Health Care Services on May 8 and learned that DMHAS' Crisis Services System operates 12 hours per day, not 24 as expected. The system operates 8 AM – 8 PM. Andrea will investigate with the CSU staff how the DMHAS system may be helpful to them and CSU students.

Training Component

Andrea reported that drafts of both Wheeler Clinic and the United Way of CT contracts for this project are in DMHAS' Fiscal Unit for language approval.

Andrea and Linda Moriber, Senior VP of United Way of CT, met on May 11 and will meet later today regarding budgeting of 2-day ASIST trainings. At present it looks as if financial constraints may limit the number of sessions that can be offered but both anticipate reaching the target number of participants. The 2-day sessions will also serve as a "feeder program" for the 5-day Training for Trainers (T4T). Andrea and Linda met via conference call with LivingWorks May 14 and have scheduled a follow-up for May 25 to address budgeting issues with the 5-day program. The program is much more costly than previously anticipated at \$16,000 per training.

Andrea and Amy met with Tim Marshall of DCF and the Emergency Mobile Psychiatric Services (EMPS) staff on April 20 to explain the SOS High School Program and invite them to participate in the AMSR Trainings. They are very excited and envision the project as a way to increase communication with both participating and non-participating schools. They are also interested in participating in SOS training and acting as resources to schools statewide.

Community Campaign

Andrea reported that DMHAS's contract with Wheeler Clinic to oversee the mini-grant program will begin July 1, 2007 and not during this fiscal year as anticipated. Payment will be front-loaded and Wheeler will receive the bulk of funds early on for subsequent distribution. SDE will not be contributing money to the campaign. DCF will match DMHAS funds and therefore fifteen to thirty awards of \$1,000 - \$2,000 are possible. The group discussed the impact of the delay on the request for proposal and application processes and determined September 2007 and May 2008 are appropriate in conjunction with Suicide Awareness Week and Mental Health Month. Amy suggested we encourage and provide technical assistance to any "near miss" applicants in the Fall to strengthen their proposals for the Spring. Allison asked if the draft RFP would include details on whether or not applicants could apply for or receive funding more than once. To be determined.

ORC Macro Site Visit

Andrea reported receipt of a Site Visit Report from Kathleen Jones at OCR Macro regarding her visit April 26 and 27. She will review the document and provide a summary of any pertinent findings at our next meeting.

Evaluation

Amy reported that the project's IRB approval through Uconn Health Center is up for continuation in June. As there have been only very minimal changes to the project – addition of Trumbull Public Schools, a Polish translation of consent forms and addition of incentives to encourage return of consent forms – she does not anticipate delay or difficulty. There is a chance the IRB may ask for additional information regarding the incentive piece; however, it is easily explained and justified.

AAS Conference

Andrea and Sue attended the American Association of Suicidology's annual conference April 11-14 in New Orleans. Both reported many of the workshops did not cover the materials anticipated and the catalog descriptions were largely inconsistent with the actual presentations. The pre-conference Sue attended was very introductory and didactic and provided little new information or opportunity for interaction. The conference overall did allow Sue to see where a lot of states were in terms of suicide prevention efforts and Connecticut is ahead of many states. Andrea attended a pre-conference on suicide prevention on college campuses and has identified the University of Texas as a resource to inform CSU contacts and this project. Some of the practical, easily implemented ideas shared in the program included crisis phone numbers on the bottom of

all course syllabuses and placing service advertisements in unexpected areas of the newspaper (e.g. in the classified listings for apartments and/or used cars).

Other

Andrea reported the Federal Agencies involved with the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline and Garrett Lee Smith Memorial Act have arranged a conference call to facilitate program integration. The call is scheduled for Monday, June 18 between 3 and 4:30 p.m. Andrea will participate and 211-Infoline has been invited to do so.

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Handouts: March 20 Meeting Minutes, April 27 Meeting Minutes (ORC Macro Site Visit)